

Taking Charge of Your Diabetes

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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Having Problems With Low Blood Glucose

In general, a blood glucose reading lower than 70 mg/dL is too low. If you take insulin or [diabetes pills](#), you can have [low blood glucose](#) (also called [hypoglycemia](#)). Low blood glucose is usually caused by eating less or later than usual, being more active than usual, or taking too much diabetes medicine. Drinking beer, wine, or liquor may also cause low blood glucose or make it worse.

Low blood glucose happens more often when you're trying to keep your glucose level near normal. This is no reason to stop trying to control your diabetes. It just means you have to watch more carefully for low levels. Talk this over with your health care team.



If you have signs that your blood glucose is low but you can't test right then....



go ahead and treat it!



Treat it every 15 minutes, until your glucose level is normal.

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Signs of Low Blood Glucose

Some possible signs of low blood glucose are feeling nervous, shaky, or sweaty. Sometimes people just feel tired.

The signs may be mild at first. But a low glucose level can quickly drop much lower if you don't treat it. When your glucose level is very low, you may get confused, pass out, or have seizures.

If you have any signs that your glucose may be low, test it right away. If it's less than 60 to 70 mg/dL, you need to treat it right away. See below for ways to treat low blood glucose.

Treating Low Blood Glucose

If you feel like your blood glucose is getting too low but you can't test it right then, play it safe—go ahead and treat it. Eat 10 to 15 grams of [carbohydrate](#) right away. See the box below for examples of foods and liquids with this amount of carbohydrate.

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Foods and Liquids for Low Blood Glucose (each item equals about 10 to 15 grams of carbohydrate)

Food Item	Amount
Sugar Packets	2 to 3
Fruit Juice	1/2 cup (4 ounces)
Soda Pop (not diet)	1/2 cup (4 ounces)
Hard Candy	3 to 5 pieces
Sugar or Honey	4 teaspoons

Glucose tablets	3 to 4
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Check your blood glucose again in 15 minutes. Eat another 10 to 15 grams of carbohydrate every 15 minutes until your blood glucose is above 70 mg/dL.

Eating or drinking an item from the list on this page will keep your glucose up for only about 30 minutes. So if your next planned meal or snack is more than 30 minutes away, you should go ahead and eat something like crackers and a tablespoon of peanut butter.

Write in your logbook why you had a low blood glucose level.

In your glucose logbook or record sheet, write down the numbers and the times when low levels happen. Think about what may be causing them. If you think you know the reason, write it beside the numbers you recorded. You may need to call your health care provider to talk about changing your diet, activity, or diabetes medicine.

Tell family members, close friends, teachers, and people at work that you have diabetes. Tell them how to know when your blood glucose is low. Show them what to do if you can't treat yourself.

Someone will need to give you fruit juice, soda pop (not diet), or sugar.

If you can't swallow, someone will need to give you a shot of [glucagon](#) and call for help. Glucagon is a prescription medicine that raises the blood glucose and is injected like insulin. If you take insulin, you should have a glucagon kit handy. Teach family members, roommates, and friends when and how to use it.

Waiting to treat low blood glucose is not safe. You may be in danger of passing out. If you get confused, pass out, or have a seizure, you need emergency help. Don't try to drive yourself to get help. Be prepared for an emergency.

Preventing Low Blood Glucose

Keep a balance

Try to stay close to your usual schedule of eating, activity, and medicine. If you're late getting a meal or if you're more active than usual, you may need an extra snack.

See [Managing Your Diabetes at Work, School, and in Travel](#) for more ideas about managing your diabetes.

Check your blood glucose

Keeping track of your blood glucose is a good way to know when it tends to run low. Show your logbook or record sheet to your health care providers. Be sure to let them know if you're having a number of low glucose readings a week.

To be safe, always check your glucose before doing any of these things:

- Driving a vehicle.



In a low blood glucose emergency, you may need to go to the hospital.

- Using heavy equipment.
- Being very physically active.
- Being active for a long time.

Ask your health care team whether you should test your glucose before (or during) any other activities.



Always carry along some food with carbohydrates in it.

Be prepared

Always carry some type of carbohydrate sugar food or drink with you so you'll be ready at any time to treat a low glucose level. See the table ["Foods and Liquids for Low Blood Glucose"](#) for snacks that have 10–15 grams of carbohydrate.

Always wear something (like an identification bracelet) that says you have diabetes. Carry a card in your wallet that says you have diabetes and tells if you use medicine to treat it.

Wear something that lets others know you have diabetes, in case of an emergency.

